



Drawing by  
Guy Coheleach

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Founded 1904

**Pasadena Audubon Society**  
A Chapter of National Audubon Society

Volume 71 — No. 5

*To bring the excitement of birds to our community through birding,  
education and the conservation of bird habitats.*

June 2023- August 2023

## Bear Divide Is Really Booming

If at this stage you are still unaware of the big doings up at Bear Divide, it's tempting to conclude that you have been hibernating. Seriously, do you live in a cave? Sorry. I'm reminded that this newsletter is meant to inform, so here is a precis of all the recent activity around this very special notch in the Western San Gabriel Mountains. Those interested in a deep dive can peruse articles on our new press page at [pasadenaudubon.org/press](http://pasadenaudubon.org/press).

On Saturday, April 8th, PAS held a Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for the Bear Divide MOTUS. Not too many birds were moving through the gap that day to herald the event, unfortunately, but plenty of MOTUS project supporters were present to enjoy the spring sunshine, listen to the dulcet melodies of Rodrigo Siamarella, sample delicious food from Kitchen Sink, and raise a glass of bubbly to this cutting-edge tool for ornithology research.

The Ribbon Cutting was also an opportunity for members to meet

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"And away we go!" PAS President Luke Tiller cuts the ribbon held by Programs Assistant Amalia Mathewson (left) and Communications Chair Jamie Cho in front of the newest MOTUS station in the Pacific Flyway.  
© Sean Doorly

### PRESIDENT'S PERCH

While watching the presentation about California Condors this month at our members meeting, I was reminded of the remarkable coming together of individuals and organizations that helped pull this incredible and compelling species back from the brink of destruction just forty or so years ago.

Talks at recent meetings have felt particularly prescient and timely. This month we heard all about the history of the California Condor and discussions included recent impacts of HPAI on the Arizona flock and a nascent bird flu vaccination program. The following day on my way to work I heard a news story about that exact same topic on the newly monikered LAist NPR station. If you missed any recent meetings, I highly recommend seeking out recordings on our YouTube page. Recent highlights for me have included "Flight Paths": a great talk about the history of those studying bird migration by Rebecca Heisman and "My Life with Audubon" by Professor Gregory Nobles.

Much like the California Condors, it wasn't that far back historically that Pasadena Audubon Society might have found itself on the brink of no longer existing too. Thanks though to a similar coming together of individuals and the dedicated hard work of many volunteers, past and present, the organization

has similarly come back from the brink and begun to flourish again. Though there will no doubt be challenges in the future for both PAS and the condors I feel that together we can face them successfully.

Recently we have lost a couple of valued board members: Corey Husic, is moving from CalTech to pastures new in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and Jane Glicksman who has graced the board for six years and fulfilled a couple of roles in the organization. She started as the editor of our beloved Wrentit newsletter and in recent years has been both our Secretary and archivist. My thanks to both for their time, energy and enthusiasm. Thankfully Jane will be staying in the area and continuing to assist us with our archives.

For me the most challenging time of year to get motivated to go out birding is summer. Usually, I would start to think about heading to the mountains to bird, but with road closures all along the Angeles Crest Highway following this winter's heavy rains few of my favorite spots are currently open to exploration. Perhaps this summer might be one to head out a little further afield to seek out other mountains to explore and hunt for one of those miraculous California Condors and just revel in their continued existence.

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## CALENDAR

### Life in a Wildlife Corridor Boddy House at Descanso Gardens June 3rd- October 1st

For the next four months, Arroyos & Foothills Conservancy is presenting an "immersive, interactive exhibit fusing art and nature" at Descanso Gardens. The exhibit highlights the stunning beauty and variety of the wildlife that surrounds us here in Southern California, while informing visitors about local conservation efforts and ways to support them.

Presented in partnership with a host of conservation organizations, including Pasadena Audubon Society, Theodore Payne Foundation, and the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, *Living In a Wildlife Corridor* features a blend of arts, native culture, and new scientific research to promote a better understanding of the region's biodiversity. And photographs from PAS members Tom Mills and Javier Vazquez will be part of the display!

Tickets are available for purchase onsite at Descanso Gardens, or online at [descansogardens.org](http://descansogardens.org) (admission is free to members of Descanso Gardens).

## CONSERVATION & ADVOCACY

Your Pasadena Audubon Conservation and Advocacy Team is seeking additional folks to support our efforts for various projects, including prevention of bird window collisions, local wildlife habitat cleanups, Pasadena's street tree plan, and especially, support for our Sacramento Advocacy Day (via Zoom) in mid-August. We, along with many other Audubon Chapters, will be chatting with our State Assembly and Senate representatives regarding pending statewide legislation, using resources of Audubon California, to focus on our highest priorities for the coming year.

Please call Dave Weeshoff at (818) 618-1652, or email [weeshoff@sbcglobal.net](mailto:weeshoff@sbcglobal.net) to match your interests with important activities to support our mission to preserve bird habitat. And let him know if you have a bird habitat in mind for a cleanup!

### Preserving and Protecting Channel Islands National Park June 21st, 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm Park Superintendent Ethan McKinley (Zoom only)



Although people from all over the country and around the world visit Channel Islands National Park, it's of particular interest to Southern California birders. Not only is it our closest national park, but it's also home to a bird found nowhere else on earth -- the Island Scrub-Jay. Ethan McKinley, the Superintendent of Channel Islands National Park, joins us to explain what's involved in protecting and nurturing this unique natural treasure.

Note: We will also be holding a Board election at this meeting, so patch in via Zoom to have your vote counted.

### Annual Members' Banquet and Slideshow July 7th, 6:30 pm to 9pm Eaton Canyon Nature Center

Save the date, because it's nearly time for the traditional summer banquet and slide show! We're capping off another outstanding year of birding, education, and conservation accomplishments we should all be proud of. The event will once again be held in Mickey Long Hall at Eaton Canyon Nature Center, but because Programs Chair Chris Spurgeon went above and beyond to book a speaker for the June meeting, the party won't be until July.

Eat tasty food and show your best bird photos to a much more receptive audience than you're liable to get anywhere else! Check the website [pasadenaudubon.org/meetings](http://pasadenaudubon.org/meetings) to see how to sign up and upload your photos.\* Tickets will go on sale soon.

\*No more than about 5 minute's worth

### Bird Book Blowout Sale! Date/Time/Location TBD (probably at Carl's home on a late June weekend)

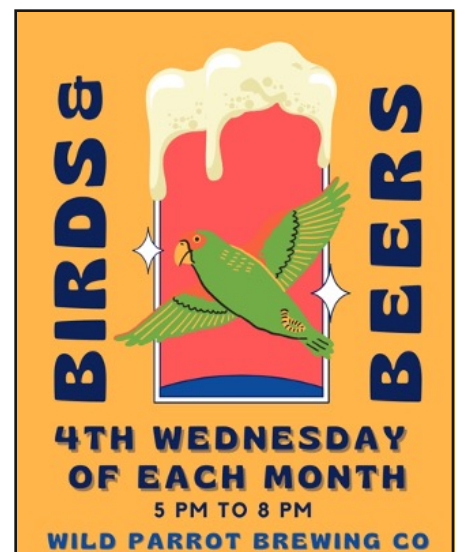
Are you a bona fide bibliophile? Do the you love the turn of the physical page and loathe the Kindles and other e-book readers? Do you like books about birds in particular? If you answered "yes" to these questions, or if you'd just like to do a little browsing and socializing, this event is for you. Come on Saturday morning if you want the best selection, Sunday afternoon if you want the bargain basement price on whatever is left over.



### Upcoming PAS Board Meetings

June 14th, 2023  
September 13th, 2023  
October 11th, 2023

The PAS Board meets 7:00 pm-8:30 pm on the second Wednesday of the month, between September and June. Contact Lois Brunet at [LoisB.PAS@gmail.com](mailto:LoisB.PAS@gmail.com) if you would like the Zoom link to attend.





**BEAR DIVIDE (CONT'D)**

Tania Romero, a graduate student in Professor Eric Wood's Lab of Avian Ecology and Conservation at Cal State LA and co-lead of the always edifying bird banding station at Bear Divide. Weeks earlier, Tania had been awarded a grant from PAS to purchase MOTUS transmitters for her study of Yellow Warbler migratory patterns. And sure enough, in May the Bear Divide MOTUS station detected its first birds with the capture and release of Ms. Romero's transmitter-equipped Warblers. Even more exciting, one of those Yellow Warblers has since been detected by a second MOTUS station north of Sacramento!

Last month PAS hosted a field trip at Bear Divide and thankfully, it was a more typically exciting day of migratory action. Highlights included Lazuli Bunting, Black-headed Grosbeak, and, as promised in the April *Wren*, a Hermit Warbler, albeit just the one. The real show-shopper was the Broad-winged Hawk, a raptor seldom seen on the West Coast and never before recorded at Bear Divide.



"Banding Together": Some of the Bear Divide Bird Banding Crew were on hand for the MOTUS Ribbon Cutting Ceremony. From left, David Mull, Tania Romero, Jayde Blair, Neysa Frechette, and Alex Bartolo © Sean Doorly



Young Birders were eager for migratory multitudes to come zipping through the divide. © Sean Doorly

Yellow Warblers were the first birds detected by the new Bear Divide MOTUS station, after they were fitted with transmitters as part of graduate student Tania Romero's PAS-supported research project. © Taylor Blee, Macaulay Library ML566182531



And finally, thanks in part to press releases crafted by PAS member Alicia Di Rado Dingsdale, Bear Divide has drawn quite a bit of media attention lately, first in the *LA Times* and then in the *Pasadena Star News* (see [pasadenaaudubon.org/press](http://pasadenaaudubon.org/press)). Both articles mention the bird-banding, the MOTUS tower, and the overall importance of the site to ornithology research. Both articles also mention PAS and quote Programs Chair Chris Spurgeon, who also penned a piece on Bear Divide for Sonoran Joint Venture, a transnational conservation coalition based in Tucson. Chris seems to be rapidly burning through his fifteen minutes of fame with the promotion of birding and bird science. That is precious time well spent, of course, and he was absolutely right when he said Bear Divide is "pure magic".



Mary Whitfield of Southern Sierra Research Station and Angeles Forest Resource Officer Jamie Uyehara were instrumental in helping PAS get a MOTUS installed at Bear Divide © Sean Doorly



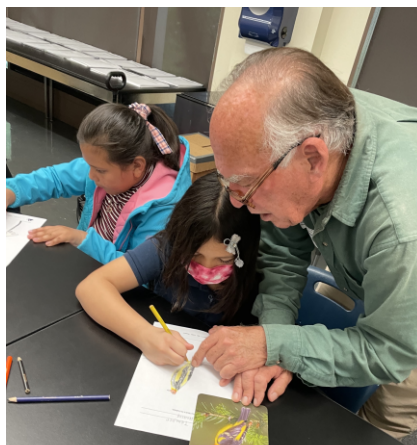
From left: Bhaskar, Lila, and Zhen Krishnamachari enjoying the fair weather and bird activity at Bear Divide. © Sean Doorly



## PROGRAMS

## A Busy Spring for PAS Programs

The school year is drawing to a close and Bird Science Program docents and interns along with our Garden Educator and Young Birder Club volunteers are exhaling! It's been a busy year!!



Docent Jerry Ewing inspects a Bird Science pupil's drawing of a Western Tanager.  
© Lois Brunet

Just a few numbers to illustrate that: 820 kids participated in the Bird Science Program with their classes, receiving lessons at school and participating in a field trip with Honey, the Barn Owl and friends, and the BSP team at our beloved Peck Park.

We also offered three Birdfests to eager schools in La Cañada, San Gabriel and Pasadena, who

wanted to get a taste of what we had to offer. These were half day events where 450 kids got to visit with educational raptors, explore displays on local nests, feathers, taxidermy of local birds, and engage in small groups with our program docents and interns. Very busy days but the excitement of the kids made it all worthwhile. I was thrilled to hear from a teacher at Palm Crest Elementary in La Cañada who reported back to me that many of the students involved, when tasked with listing highlights of the year, included our visit!

Our Young Birders were also treated to a whole series of field trips, including a twilight walk in the San Gabriels and a tour of Bear Divide, led by none other than PAS President Luke Tiller and his partner, Catherine Hamilton. Lucky kids indeed! They also participated in monthly zooms touching on many themes, including the importance of tree cavities, with guest speaker Gillian Martin.

The Garden is another central piece of our educational offerings. Evellyn Rosas has led the charge at Washington Elementary to ensure that the native habitat garden that was established in 2019 with the help of many PAS members, continues to thrive. More importantly she has helped both



You would be hard-pressed to find a more beautiful toolshed than the one at Washington Elementary Native Habitat Garden now that Elizabeth Jean Younce (aka @mustardbeetle) has worked her magic on it. © Lois Brunet

teachers and students adopt the space as we had hoped, as a learning resource to connect with the natural world.



Evellyn Rosas and PAS Volunteers have the Washington Elementary Garden looking so sweet it was featured in Theodore Payne's Native Plant Garden Tour back in April. © Lois Brunet

STEM teacher Jodie West reports that feedback from teachers and students has been overwhelmingly positive, "so much so that we extended the learning days for every grade level!! Some comments from teachers," "The Pasadena Audubon Garden Educator helps to bring the natural world to the children. She gives them an up-close look at what lives in the garden and the many habitats that exist there". "The kids enjoy learning about the balance of ecosystems". "The learning in that space has a positive effect on the kids emotionally and mentally". "The activities she designs stimulate all of the students' senses". "The garden educator helps teachers and students see that the garden is not just a place to study, but a place to enjoy and a place where the school community learns how to take responsibility for our environment".

What more could we want? A garden in every school? Let's talk about that!

Lois Brunet



Norm Vargas and Delaney assemble one of the many nestboxes built by Young Birders in his backyard workshop...



...and Katarina Doorly tightens a screw on another. © Sean Doorly



## Spark Birds

Few people are born loving birds. There's usually a seminal event, a watershed moment, a transformative sighting that ignites our passion and draws us into the avian world. The term for these epiphanies is "spark birds", and *Wrentit* thought it would be fun to ask PAS members to share their spark bird stories.

"I truly surprised myself by becoming a birder during the pandemic. I had never considered birding until I read J. Drew Lanham's book *The Home Place*. I was attending an outdoor literature book club that met online. As an African American woman, I was intrigued by *The Home Place* chapter entitled "Birding While Black." I decided I would ask for binoculars and a field guide for Christmas. I was so excited about my Christmas gifts that I went to the Los Angeles Arboretum on December 26, 2020, to watch birds. And there it was! The most beautiful bird I've ever seen in my life! In fact, it looked more like a painting than a real bird. And for me it was bird love at first sight. I've never been quite the same since that day. The Wood Duck sparked an enduring preoccupation with the wonder of birds. The best Christmas ever!"

*Novellyn Heard*



*The beautiful markings of the Wood Duck were not lost on Novellyn Heard. © Jim Margitan*

"Why settle for one spark bird when you can have two? In the early days of COVID, I joined the work-from-home army. I set up a tube feeder on the balcony next to my home office to bring the sounds of nature closer to me. One day, a flash of red caught my eye. A tiny bird was pecking at the base of my sliding door, lifting his red crest as he attacked the glass and cocked his head from side to side. I grew obsessed. What sort of freaky bird was this? What was he doing? My husband quickly ordered me the "Birds of California" paperback guide, and I discovered that I had a Ruby-crowned Kinglet visiting the drop zone below the feeder. I figure he saw his reflection and was performing some sort of display. Unfortunately, he disappeared after a week, and I put my book back on my shelf. But a few months later, a new, pocket-sized bird began to visit. To say I loved this bird is an understatement. In the morning, I'd hear his trilling call. He hopped, bobbed, and lifted his brown tail to the sky, holding to the same bouncy routine every

day. He looked at me quizzically through the window as I worked. This Bewick's Wren became known as 'My Wren Friend.' He finished the work the kinglet started and pulled me into the birding world. My Wren Friend still stops by daily without fail.

Thanks to my dynamic duo of spark birds!"

*Alicia Di Rado Dingsdale*



*During the pandemic, Alicia Di Rado Dingsdale got by with a little help from her "Wren Friend". © Jim Margitan*

"When I was little, maybe six years old, I was standing on the back steps like any other day when I saw something unusual. There was a bird in the neighbor's tree that I had never seen before, at least not up close. I hadn't really paid much attention to birds in the past, but this one was

striking. It had a pointy black crest, bright red cheeks, and a loud, distinct sound that made me feel like I had to show my parents, who had never seen it before, either. That first glimpse of a Red-whiskered Bulbul was the start of all my birding adventures."

*Wolfgang Matthies*



*"O pointy bird, O pointy pointy..." The pointy Red-whiskered Bulbul made quite an impression on Wolf Matthies. © Marky Mutchler*

near San Francisco Bay, and spent hours every week running on the trails at the Palo Alto Baylands, a beautiful marsh area with miles and miles of trails and thousands of shorebirds, raptors, sparrows, and many other species.

During my pregnancy I had some issues and was told to stop running, so I decided this was the moment to take up birding. I bought some small binoculars and the *Audubon Guide to Western Birds*. I figured Audubon must be a good field guide,

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## SPARK BIRDS (CONT'D)

right? So for a year I struggled with trying to identify birds but I made slow progress. One day I was at the Baylands and I saw a flock of black ducks paddling around, and they would get out of the water and walk around. I looked in my book under ducks and there was just nothing that looked like what I was seeing, no black ducks. Then I had the brilliant idea of just watching them, and I realized they walked like chickens, sticking their heads out and waddling. So I looked in the game birds section of the book and lo and behold, there they were! American Coots. One of the most common water birds you'll see anywhere in North America, often in the same water with ducks – but they aren't ducks, and they are described as plump and chickenlike on land. So that was my first lesson in watching bird behavior. That was the point I really got hooked on birding. The more you practice, the more you know what to look for. Now I'm a committed birder, which doesn't mean I'm an expert, it just means I spend a lot of time doing it! And fortunately I figured out pretty quickly that the Audubon guide is about the worst field guide there is, and eventually landed on Sibley.



"Hehehe...with my chickeny feet hidden under the murky water, Emily Allen will search the duck section of her field guide in vain trying to identify me." © Tom Cassaro

By the way that baby grew up, and I could never get her to be interested in birding, but last winter she sent me a video and asked me what kind of woodpecker they were seeing in a tree while out snowshoeing. So maybe she'll become a birder someday after all."

*Emily Allen*

"I had an L.A. Zoo membership when my daughter was in elementary school (about 15 years ago?). One of the membership activities was summer evening Bird & Bat Walks: at closing time, docents led members on a tour that culminated in seeing the roosting bats in the pavilion fly out for the night to search for insects.

The lead docent was so impressive at rapidly identifying birds during the walk (often only by hearing them) that I began to wonder if I could learn to do that. I started paying more attention to the birds in my yard & neighborhood, and I put up some bird feeders. One day I noticed an individual bird that would come to the feeder and fly off with its seed. I was able to describe its behavior and how it looked to the docent on my

next zoo visit - she was able to name it: Oak Titmouse. She told me that it felt comfortable coming to my yard since it saw other birds there. I have felt a particular fondness for that species ever since."

*Elizabeth Tatum*



Ever since one showed up at her feeder, Elizabeth Tatum has had a soft spot for the Oak Titmouse, and why wouldn't she? © Kathy Degner

I encountered my spark bird because it was my turn to take out the recycling; a male Hooded Oriole was within arm's reach, fluttering in the blooms of a Giant Bird of Paradise plant. The close-up view, the vivid contrast of black on deep yellow, completely hooked me. That one surprise sighting opened my eyes to the astonishing variety of birds we can see here in Southern California!

*Heather Wilson*



Heather Wilson's spark bird story underscores the role of kismet in becoming a birder. Hooded Orioles are not always around, and when they are the decked-out males can be very skittish, but Heather happened to make a routine trip outside at just the right moment to be astonished.  
© Ira Blitz



## Dave Jokes



**Why did the TSA agent stop an ostrich and a vulture from boarding a plane?**



**Because the ostrich was on the No-Fly List, and the vulture had more than one carrion.**



## CHAPTER NEWS

## PAS Birding Guide Expands Range

Pasadena Audubon Society (PAS) launched the second edition of its popular *Birding Guide to the Greater Pasadena Area* on May 1, 2022. Along with the publication was a commitment to donate 20% of the first run of 1000 guides to schools, libraries, nature centers and organizations with similar missions of conservation of bird habitats, education, and the enjoyment of birds. Executive Director Lois Brunet initiated phase 1 of the donation project from May through October 2022. Soon after, new chapter member Gesna Clarke volunteered to coordinate the project.

When asked why she chose to take on the task Gesna replied: "As a mobility challenged person, this is an important way for me to stay connected to PAS. The project allows me to work at my own pace, without the pressure of meeting short term timelines. One of my greatest joys is talking with people who appreciate the chapter's generosity!"

Together Lois and Gesna have so far donated 80 guides, or forty percent of the target goal. Recipients to date include university research centers, high schools and libraries in the seventeen cities served by the Pasadena Audubon chapter, and other chapter friends. The donation process has evolved to a strategic plan of contacting each potential donation site to confirm their interest in receiving the guide, rather than just dropping off a copy. This is a slow and deliberate process with the end goal of possibly increasing membership and participation in field trips and other chapter activities. If you have suggestions for organizations or groups with a similar mission as PAS and who would appreciate a copy, contact Gesna Clarke at gesnaclarke912@gmail.com.

### THANK YOU TO OUR WONDERFUL DONORS!

Your generous support keeps our community thriving.

**CALIFORNIA THRASHER (\$100-\$249):** Harry & Karen Brumer, Ramie Case of Eaton Canyon Nature Center Association, John C. Fauvre, Julia Alicia Wilcox Emerson, Beth Gertmenian, Julia Hastings, Kurt Liewer, Wendy & Anthony Price

**WRENTIT (\$5-\$99):** duVergne Gaines, Kirsten & John Jackson of Wild Parrot Brewing Company, Shake Mamigonian, Karen Perper, Victoria Rimac

#### MEMORIAL & HONORARY GIFTS:

Reilly Moss donated in memory of Ruth Galloway, who loved birding

Carl Matthies donated in memory of Silas Samuel Matthies

**DAWN CHORUS:** Emily L. Allen, Martin Bern, Hannah Carbone, Gesna Clarke, Kathy Degner, Gail Gibson & Connie Pearson, Karen Hansen, Sarah Hilbert, Jared Knickmeyer & Lynda Elkin, Alice Lewin, Kristen Ochoa & Shana Pallotta, Taylor Paez, Susan Reedy, Laura & Gavin Solomon, Chris Spurgeon, Elaine Tietjen, Patrick & Cheryl Walling, Dave Weeshoff

## PAS Board Nominates Slate of Candidates

It is nigh time for PAS to hold a special summer solstice election! In accordance with our bylaws, the Board nominated a slate of candidates for the four elected offices at its May meeting. The slate is the same as last year's with the exception of Secretary, for which Mayra Sánchez Barba has volunteered to fill the very big shoes of outgoing Secretary Jane Glicksman. Voting will take place at the general membership meeting (exclusively via Zoom) on June 21st. Other candidates can be nominated from the floor at that time.



President: Luke Tiller



VP: Dave Weeshoff



Treasurer: Gary Breaux



Secretary: Mayra Sánchez Barba

## PRESIDENT'S PERCH (CONTINUED)

We are lucky enough to have three publicly accessible locations that one might seek out California Condors within an hour or two driving from Pasadena. Closest, but perhaps least reliable, is the area in LA County just north of Castaic around Templin Highway and Pyramid Lake. A little further afield is Lake Piru in Ventura County just west of Castaic along the 136. The furthest, but most reliable, is Bitter Creek NWR and Los Padres National Forest. A couple of weeks ago I took some birders from Ontario to seek out these magnificent birds and was lucky enough to see a pair of majestic condors soaring above Valle Vista Campground just east of Bitter Creek.

Good Birding!

Luke Tiller

## Become a Part of the Dawn Chorus

Consider joining our monthly donor program to provide ongoing support for all our programs and events. Sign up at [pasadenaaudubon.org/donate](https://pasadenaaudubon.org/donate). Dawn Chorus donors receive a beautiful enamel pin designed by PAS' own Patrick Walling and Graham Hamby!



**Pasadena Audubon Society Board**

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Luke Tiller	President	luke.tiller@gmail.com
Dave Weeshoff	Vice President	weeshoff@sbcglobal.net
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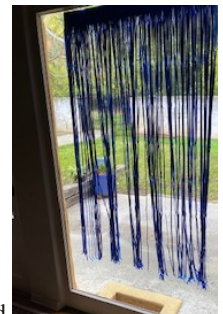
## A Warm Welcome to Our Newest Members!

ALHAMBRA: Gloria Ancira, David Boos, Harry Wong;  
ALTADENA: Bridgette Campbell & Christopher Wallinger,  
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Schmalfeld, Kelly Smith; ARCADIA: Henry Hawkins, Robert  
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Liu, Danielle & Thomas Poulsen; SOUTH PASADENA: Rita  
Colthurst; STUDIO CITY: Harry Pallenberg; TEMPLE CITY:  
Deborah Radwan, Lara Tseng

## LETTERS

Concerning the issue of residential window strikes, member Julie Parker wrote to say she had found a cheap and effective solution for her home.

"Our camphor tree is loaded with berries in fall. Robins, bluebirds, red-whiskered bulbuls and cedar waxwings love to gather to feed in flocks. An occasional hermit thrush and flicker is among them, and who knows how many yellow rumps and less common warblers. We have had a dangerous combination for them due to large picture windows that reflect greenery and sky. Over the years we have cut out and hung black poster board raptors that swing, and have pulled blinds inside, all to no avail. One year a bluebird female killed herself and lay lifeless on the cement in front; another year a hermit thrush met the same fate, and on the worst year three cedar waxwings died, all cold by the time we discovered them.



We recently purchased stripped window screens from Oriental Trading Company. They come neatly wrapped on a paper 'bobbin' and have a strip of sticky tape that applies easily to our window, or two ring holes for hooking on nails. They are great because we can see out between the strips of shiny plastic, but birds are deterred. They blow gracefully in a breeze."